

MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE 56th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN ARNIE MOHL**, on March 16, 1999 at 3:11 P.M., in Room 410 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Arnie Mohl, Chairman (R)
Sen. Ric Holden, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Mack Cole (R)
Sen. Bob DePratu (R)
Sen. John Hertel (R)
Sen. Reiny Jabs (R)
Sen. Greg Jergeson (D)
Sen. Glenn Roush (D)
Sen. Debbie Shea (D)
Sen. Spook Stang (D)
Sen. Daryl Toews (R)

Members Excused: None.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Connie Erickson, Legislative Branch
Phoebe Olson, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:
Informational meeting.

SENATOR MOHL, brought the committee up to date about what would happen at the next two meetings. He commented that he was sure everyone had read the articles in the paper about the letter to the Governor about the concerns that the Department of Transportation get jobs to letting. He notified the committee that leadership had suggested that the Department come to explain how the program worked. He contended that if the department kept going the way they were going, there would be massive excess of money that would not be spent.

SENATOR STANG, said he had spoken with his Highway Commissioner and he had seen no problem with spending 220 million a year, and it was his intention to see that the money was spent and that these concerns were premature. He suggested that the committee all talk to their Highway Commissioners to see what they thought.

SENATOR HOLDEN, added that he hadn't signed the letter but he had talked to former commissioner Ed Smith. Ed Smith had reported they did not have the contracts lined up to do the work.

SENATOR MOHL, said in 1998 the Department spent 170 million out of 220 million that should have been spent. He said that the Department hoped to spend 187 million plus 35 million in 1999.

SENATOR STANG, asked what the subcommittee had done with the Department of Transportation's budget.

SENATOR MOHL, said he told the Department that if they brought him a list of employees they needed they would approve them, but if they didn't meet the requirements of TEA-21 they would have to reduce the employees accordingly.

SENATOR COLE, asked if the committee would hear the Department's side of the story as well, because he was receiving real mixed signals.

SENATOR MOHL, said they would talk about it over the next two meetings.

SENATOR DEPRATU, explained that he had received a lot of letters about the area on Highway 93 where the little girl had been killed.

SENATOR MOHL, said they had also talked about hiring an intern to take care of all the condemnation cases. And also local appraisers to take care of the right-of-way problems. He explained some problems they were having in Great Falls as well as Billings. He said it was important that the Department get organized.

SENATOR STANG, said the Department should spend the money elsewhere and not wait for the projects that are held up for environmental reasons.

SENATOR MOHL, said that was exactly what they should be doing. He expressed that the Department should try to use the private sector more often.

The committee discussed plans for their end of the session dinner and then adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:25 P.M.

SEN. ARNIE MOHL, Chairman

PHOEBE OLSON, Secretary

AM/PO

EXHIBIT (his59aad)